

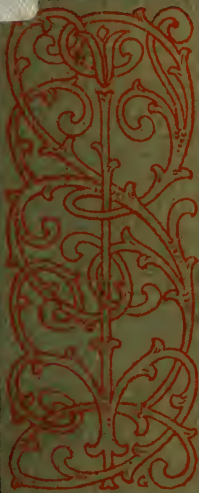
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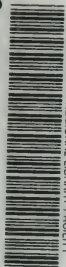
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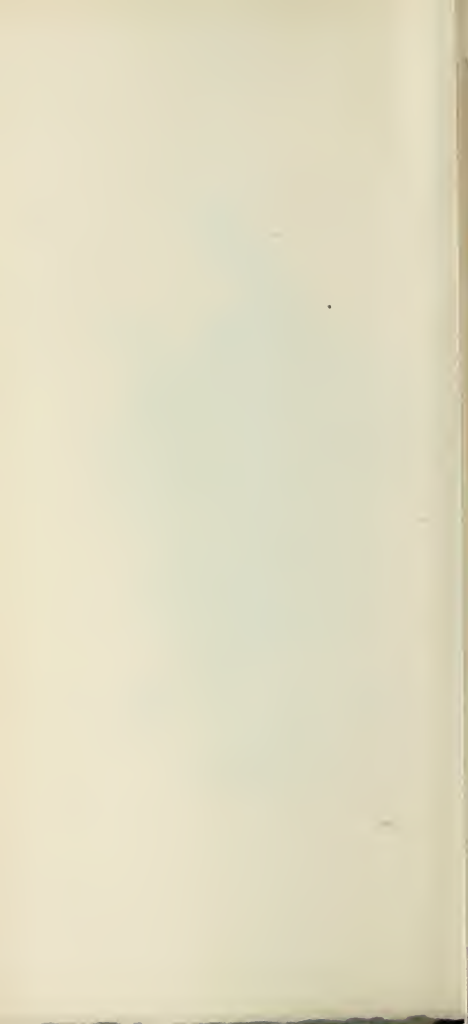


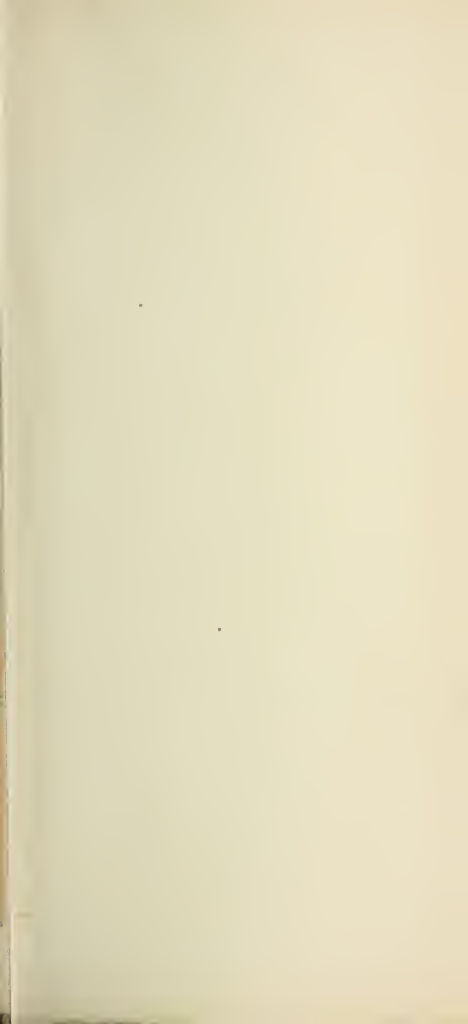




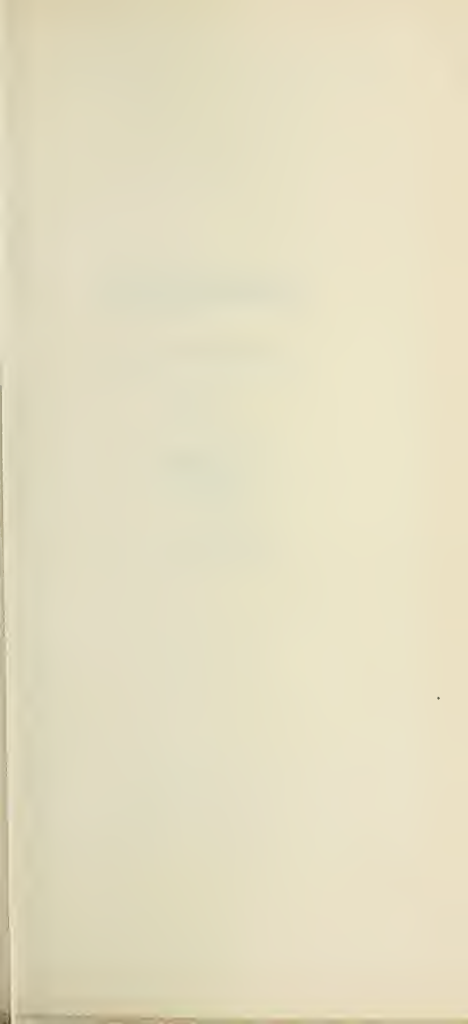
ANDREWS















LAUS VENERIS

1866





ALGERNON CHARLES
SWINBURNE

LAUS VENERIS



PORTLAND MAINE
THOMAS B MOSHER
MDCCCXCIX

FIRST EDITION, JULY, 1900
SECOND EDITION, JUNE, 1909



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PREFACE



The following remarks are taken from the *Notes on Poems and Reviews*—that magnificent impeachment of his detractors which Swinburne put forth shortly after the publication and during the temporary withdrawal of his *Poems and Ballads* (London, 1866). It may here be said once and for all that no word or line of *Laus Veneris* has ever been altered from the first to the latest edition. As it was originally given to the world so, in the words of Richard Grant White, it stands to-day—"an expression of beauty and passion in this fearless old fashion; naked, free and strong. Naked not for the nakedness, but for the sake of freedom, strength and beauty."



PREFACE

OF the poem in which I have attempted once more to embody the legend of Venus and her knight, I need say only that my first aim was to rehandle the old story in a new fashion. To me it seemed that the tragedy began with the knight's return to Venus — began at the point where hitherto it had seemed to leave off. The immortal agony of a man lost after all repentance — cast down from fearful hope into fearless despair — believing in Christ and bound to Venus — desirous of penitential pain, and damned to joyless pleasure — this, in my eyes, was the kernel and nucleus of a myth comparable only to that of the foolish virgins and bearing the same burden. The tragic touch of the story is this: that the knight who has renounced Christ believes

PREFACE

in him; the lover who has embraced Venus disbelieves in her. Vainly and in despair would he make the best of that which is the worst — vainly remonstrate with God, and argue on the side he would fain desert. Once accept or admit the least admixture of pagan worship, or of modern thought, and the whole story collapses into froth and smoke. It was not till my poem was completed that I received from the hands of its author the admirable pamphlet of Charles Baudelaire on Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. If any one desires to see, expressed in better words than I can command, the conception of the mediæval Venus which it was my aim to put into verse, let him turn to the magnificent passage in which M. Baudelaire describes the fallen goddess, grown diabolic among ages that would not accept her as divine. In another point, as I then found, I concur with the great

PREFACE

musician and his great panegyrist. I have made Venus the one love of her knight's whole life, as Mary Stuart of Chastelard's; I have sent him, poet and soldier, fresh to her fierce embrace. Thus only both legend and symbol appear to me noble and significant. Light loves and harmless errors must not touch the elect of heaven or of hell. The queen of evil, the lady of lust, will endure no rival but God; and when the vicar of God rejects him, to her only can he return to abide the day of his judgment in weariness and sorrow and fear.

A. C. SWINBURNE.



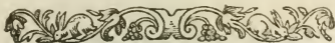


LAUS VENERIS

1866







LAUS VENERIS

I

A SLEEP or waking is it? for her
neck,
Kissed over close, wears yet a
purple speck
Wherein the pained blood fal-
ters and goes out;
Soft, and stung softly — fairer for
a fleck.

II

But though my lips shut sucking
on the place,
There is no vein at work upon her
face;
Her eyelids are so peaceable,
no doubt
Deep sleep has warmed her blood
through all its ways.

III

Lo, this is she that was the world's
 delight ;
 The old grey years were parcels of
 her might ;
 The strewings of the ways
 wherein she trod
 Were the twain seasons of the
 day and night.

IV

Lo, she was thus when her clear
 limbs enticed
 All lips that now grow sad with
 kissing Christ,
 Stained with blood fallen from
 the feet of God,
 The feet and hands whereat our
 souls were priced.

V

Alas, Lord, surely thou art great
 and fair.
 But lo her wonderfully woven
 hair !
 And thou didst heal us with thy
 piteous kiss ;
 But see now, Lord ; her mouth is
 lovelier.

VI

She is right fair; what hath she
done to thee?

Nay, fair Lord Christ, lift up thine
eyes and see;

Had now thy mother such a
lip — like this?

Thou knowest how sweet a thing
it is to me.

VII

Inside the Horsel here the air is
hot;

Right little peace one hath for it,
God wot;

The scented dusty daylight
burns the air,

And my heart chokes me till I
hear it not.

VIII

Behold, my Venus, my soul's body,
lies

With my love laid upon her gar-
ment-wise,

Feeling my love in all her limbs
and hair

And shed between her eyelids
through her eyes.

IX

She holds my heart in her sweet
 open hands
 Hanging asleep; hard by her head
 there stands,
 Crowned with gilt thorns and
 clothed with flesh like fire,
 Love, wan as foam blown up the
 salt burnt sands —

X

Hot as the brackish waifs of yellow
 spume
 That shift and steam — loose clots
 of arid fume
 From the sea's panting mouth
 of dry desire;
 There stands he, like one labour-
 ing at a loom.

XI

The warp holds fast across; and
 every thread
 That makes the woof up has dry
 specks of red;
 Always the shuttle cleaves clean
 through, and he
 Weaves with the hair of many a
 ruined head.

XII

Love is not glad nor sorry, as I
 deem ;
 Labouring he dreams, and labours
 in the dream,
 Till when the spool is finished,
 lo I see
 His web, reeled off, curls and goes
 out like steam.

XIII

Night falls like fire ; the heavy
 lights run low,
 And as they drop, my blood and
 body so
 Shake as the flame shakes, full
 of days and hours
 That sleep not neither weep they
 as they go.

XIV

Ah yet would God this flesh of
 mine might be
 Where air might wash and long
 leaves cover me,
 Where tides of grass break into
 foam of flowers,
 Or where the wind's feet shine
 along the sea.

XV

Ah yet would God that stems and
 roots were bred
Out of my weary body and my
 head,
 That sleep were sealed upon me
 with a seal,
And I were as the least of all his
 dead.

XVI

Would God my blood were dew
 to feed the grass,
Mine ears made deaf and mine
 eyes blind as glass,
 My body broken as a turning
 wheel,
And my mouth stricken ere it
 saith Alas!

XVII

Ah God, that love were as a
 flower or flame,
That life were as the naming of a
 name,
 That death were not more pitiful
 than desire,
That these things were not one
 thing and the same!

XVIII

Behold now, surely somewhere
there is death :

For each man hath some space of
years, he saith,

A little space of time ere time
expire,

A little day, a little way of
breath.

XIX

And lo, between the sundawn and
the sun,

His day's work and his night's
work are undone ;

And lo, between the nightfall
and the light,

He is not, and none knoweth of
such an one.

XX

Ah God, that I were as all souls
that be,

As any herb or leaf of any
tree,

As men that toil through hours
of labouring night,

As bones of men under the deep
sharp sea.

XXI

Outside it must be winter among
 men ;
 For at the gold bars of the gates
 again
 I heard all night and all the
 hours of it,
 The wind's wet wings and fingers
 drip with rain.

XXII

Knights gather, riding sharp for
 cold; I know
 The ways and woods are strangled
 with the snow;
 And with short song the maid-
 ens spin and sit
 Until Christ's birthnight, lily-like,
 arow.

XXIII

The scent and shadow shed about
 me make
 The very soul in all my senses
 ache ;
 The hot hard night is fed upon
 my breath,
 And sleep beholds me from afar
 awake.

XXIV

Alas, but surely where the hills
 grow deep,
 Or where the wild ways of the
 sea are steep,
 Or in strange places somewhere
 there is death,
 And on death's face the scattered
 hair of sleep.

XXV

There lover-like with lips and limbs
 that meet
 They lie, they pluck sweet fruit of
 life and eat ;
 But me the hot and hungry days
 devour,
 And in my mouth no fruit of
 theirs is sweet.

XXVI

No fruit of theirs, but fruit of my
 desire,
 For her love's sake whose lips
 through mine respire ;
 Her eyelids on her eyes like
 flower on flower,
 Mine eyelids on mine eyes like
 fire on fire.

XXVII

So lie we, not as sleep that lies by
 death,
 With heavy kisses and with happy
 breath;
 Not as man lies by woman,
 when the bride
 Laughs low for love's sake and
 the words he saith.

XXVIII

For she lies, laughing low with
 love; she lies
 And turns his kisses on her lips to
 sighs,
 To sighing sound of lips un-
 satisfied,
 And the sweet tears are tender
 with her eyes.

XXIX

Ah, not as they, but as the souls
 that were
 Slain in the old time, having found
 her fair;
 • Who, sleeping with her lips
 upon their eyes,
 Heard sudden serpents hiss across
 her hair.

XXX

Their blood runs round the roots
of time like rain :
She casts them forth and gathers
them again ;
With nerve and bone she weaves
and multiplies
Exceeding pleasure out of extreme
pain.

XXXI

Her little chambers drip with
flower-like red,
Her girdles, and the chaplets of
her head,
Her armlets and her anklets ;
with her feet
She tramples all that winepress of
the dead.

XXXII

Her gateways smoke with fume of
flowers and fires,
With loves burnt out and unas-
suaged desires ;
Between her lips the steam of
them is sweet,
The languor in her ears of many
lyres.

XXXIII

Her beds are full of perfume and
 sad sound,
 Her doors are made with music,
 and barred round
 With sighing and with laughter
 and with tears,
 With tears whereby strong souls
 of men are bound.

XXXIV

There is the knight Adonis that
 was slain ;
 With flesh and blood she chains
 him for a chain ;
 The body and the spirit in her
 ears
 Cry, for her lips divide him vein
 by vein.

XXXV

Yea, all she slayeth ; yea, every
 man save me ;
 Me, love, thy lover that must
 cleave to thee
 Till the ending of the days and
 ways of earth,
 The shaking of the sources of the
 sea.

XXXVI

Me, most forsaken of all souls
that fell;

Me, satiated with things insa-
tiable;

Me, for whose sake the extreme
hell makes mirth,

Yea, laughter kindles at the heart
of hell.

XXXVII

Alas thy beauty! for thy mouth's
sweet sake

My soul is bitter to me, my limbs
quake

As water, as the flesh of men
that weep,

As their heart's vein whose heart
goes nigh to break.

XXXVIII

Ah God, that sleep with flower-
sweet finger-tips

Would crush the fruit of death
upon my lips;

Ah God, that death would tread
the grapes of sleep

And wring their juice upon me as
it drips.

XXXIX

There is no change of cheer for
 many days,
 But change of chimes high up in
 the air, that sways
 Rung by the running fingers of
 the wind;
 And singing sorrows heard on
 hidden ways.

XL

Day smiteth day in twain, night
 sundereth night,
 And on mine eyes the dark sits as
 the light;
 Yea, Lord, thou knowest I know
 not, having sinned,
 If heaven be clean or unclean in
 thy sight.

XLI

Yea, as if earth were sprinkled
 over me,
 Such chafed harsh earth as chokes
 a sandy sea,
 Each pore doth yearn, and the
 dried blood thereof
 Gasps by sick fits, my heart swims
 heavily,

XLII

There is a feverish famine in my
 veins ;
 Below her bosom, where a crushed
 grape stains
 The white and blue, there my
 lips caught and clove
 An hour since, and what mark of
 me remains ?

XLIII

I dare not always touch her, lest
 the kiss
 Leave my lips charred. Yea,
 Lord, a little bliss,
 Brief bitter bliss, one hath for a
 great sin ;
 Nathless thou knowest how sweet
 a thing it is.

XLIV

Sin, is it sin whereby men's souls
 are thrust
 Into the pit? yet had I a good
 trust
 To save my soul before it
 slipped therein,
 Trod under by the fire-shod feet
 of lust.

XLV

For if mine eyes fail and my soul
 takes breath,
 I look between the iron sides of
 death
 Into sad hell where all sweet
 love hath end,
 All but the pain that never
 finisheth.

XLVI

There are the naked faces of
 great kings,
 The singing folk with all their
 lute-playings;
 There when one cometh he shall
 have to friend
 The grave that covets and the
 worm that clings.

XLVII

There sit the knights that were so
 great of hand,
 The ladies that were queens of
 fair green land,
 Grown grey and black now,
 brought unto the dust,
 Soiled, without raiment, clad about
 with sand.

XLVIII

There is one end for all of them ;
 they sit
 Naked and sad, they drink the
 dregs of it,
 Trodden as grapes in the wine-
 press of lust,
 Trampled and trodden by the
 fiery feet.

XLIX

I see the marvellous mouth where-
 by there fell
 Cities and people whom the gods
 loved well,
 Yet for her sake on them the
 fire gat hold,
 And for their sakes on her the
 fire of hell.

L

And softer than the Egyptian
 lote-leaf is,
 The queen whose face was worth
 the world to kiss,
 Wearing at breast a suckling
 snake of gold ;
 And large pale lips of strong
 Semiramis.

L.I

Curled like a tiger's that curl back
 to feed ;
 Red only where the last kiss made
 them bleed ;
 Her hair most thick with many
 a carven gem,
 Deep in the mane, great-chested,
 like a steed.

L.II

Yea, with red sin the faces of
 them shine ;
 But in all these there was no sin
 like mine ;
 No, not in all the strange great
 sins of them
 That made the wine-press froth
 and foam with wine.

L.III

For I was of Christ's choosing, I
 God's knight,
 No blinkard heathen stumbling
 for scant light ;
 I can well see, for all the dusty
 days
 Gone past, the clean great time of
 goodly fight.

LIV

I smell the breathing battle sharp
 with blows,
 With shriek of shafts and snapping
 short of bows ;
 The fair pure sword smites out
 in subtle ways,
 Sounds and long lights are shed
 between the rows

LV

Of beautiful mailed men; the
 edged light slips,
 Most like a snake that takes short
 breath and dips
 Sharp from the beautifully
 bending head,
 With all its gracious body lithe
 as lips

LVI

That curl in touching you; right
 in this wise
 My sword doth, seeming fire in
 mine own eyes,
 Leaving all colours in them
 brown and red
 And flecked with death; then the
 keen breaths like sighs,

LVII

The caught-up choked dry laugh-
 ters following them,
 When all the fighting face is
 grown a flame
 For pleasure, and the pulse that
 stuns the ears,
 And the heart's gladness of the
 goodly game.

LVIII

Let me think yet a little; I do
 know
 These things were sweet, but sweet
 such years ago,
 Their savour is all turned now
 into tears;
 Yea, ten years since, where the
 blue ripples blow,

LIX

The blue curled eddies of the
 blowing Rhine,
 I felt the sharp wind shaking
 grass and vine
 Touch my blood too, and sting
 me with delight
 Through all this waste and weary
 body of mine

LX

That never feels clear air; right
 gladly then
 I rode alone, a great way off my
 men,
 And heard the chiming bridle
 smite and smite,
 And gave each rhyme thereof
 some rhyme again,

LXI

Till my song shifted to that iron
 one;
 Seeing there rode up between me
 and the sun
 Some certain of my foe's men,
 for his three
 White wolves across their painted
 coats did run.

LXII

The first red-bearded, with square
 cheeks — alack,
 I made my knave's blood turn his
 beard to black;
 The slaying of him was a joy to
 see:
 Perchance too, when at night he
 came not back,

LXIII

Some woman fell a-weeping, whom
 this thief
 Would beat when he had drunken ;
 yet small grief
 Hath any for the ridding of
 such knaves ;
 Yea, if one wept, I doubt her
 teen was brief. ·

LXIV

This bitter love is sorrow in all
 lands,
 Draining of eyelids, wringing of
 drenched hands,
 Sighing of hearts and filling up
 of graves ;
 A sign across the head of the
 world he stands,

LXV

As one that hath a plague-mark
 on his brows ;
 Dust and spilt blood do track him
 to his house
 Down under earth ; sweet smells
 of lip and cheek,
 Like a sweet snake's breath made
 more poisonous

LXVI

With chewing of some perfumed
 deadly grass,
 Are shed all round his passage if
 he pass,
 And their quenched savour
 leaves the whole soul weak,
 Sick with keen guessing whence
 the perfume was.

LXVII

As one who hidden in deep sedge
 and reeds
 Smells the rare scent made where
 a panther feeds,
 And tracking ever slotwise the
 warm smell
 Is snapped upon by the sweet
 mouth and bleeds,

LXVIII

His head far down the hot sweet
 throat of her—
 So one tracks love, whose breath
 is deadlier,
 And lo, one springe and you are
 fast in hell,
 Fast as the gin's grip of a
 wayfarer.

LXIX

I think now, as the heavy hours
 decrease
 One after one, and bitter thoughts
 increase
 One upon one, of all sweet fin-
 ished things;
 The breaking of the battle; the
 long peace

LXX

Wherein we sat clothed softly,
 each man's hair
 Crowned with green leaves beneath
 white hoods of vair;
 The sounds of sharp spears at
 great tourneyings,
 And noise of singing in the late
 sweet air.

LXXI

I sang of love, too, knowing
 nought thereof;
 "Sweeter," I said, "the little
 laugh of love
 Than tears out of the eyes of
 Magdalen,
 Or any fallen feather of the
 Dove.

LXXII

“The broken little laugh that
 spoils a kiss,
 The ache of purple pulses, and the
 bliss
 Of blinded eyelids that expand
 again —
 Love draws them open with those
 lips of his,

LXXIII

“Lips that cling hard till the
 kissed face has grown
 Of one same fire and colour with
 their own ;
 Then ere one sleep, appeased
 with sacrifice,
 Where his lips wounded, there his
 lips atone.”

LXXIV

I sang these things long since and
 knew them not ;
 “Lo, here is love, or there is love,
 God wot,
 This man and that finds favour
 in his eyes,”
 I said, “but I, what guerdon have
 I got ?

LXXV

“ The dust of praise that is blown
 everywhere
 In all men’s faces with the com-
 mon air ;
 The bay-leaf that wants chafing
 to be sweet
 Before they wind it in a singer’s
 hair.”

LXXVI

So that one dawn I rode forth
 sorrowing ;
 I had no hope but of some evil
 thing,
 And so rode slowly past the
 windy wheat,
 And past the vineyard and the
 water-spring,

LXXVII

Up to the Horsel. A great elder-
 tree
 Held back its heaps of flowers to
 let me see
 The ripe tall grass, and one that
 walked therein,
 Naked, with hair shed over to the
 knee.

LXXVIII

She walked between the blossom
 and the grass ;
 I knew the beauty of her, what
 she was,
 The beauty of her body and her
 sin,
 And in my flesh the sin of hers,
 alas !

LXXIX

Alas ! for sorrow is all the end of
 this.
 O sad kissed mouth, how sorrow-
 ful it is !
 O breast whereat some suckling
 sorrow clings,
 Red with the bitter blossom of a
 kiss !

LXXX

Ah, with blind lips I felt for you,
 and found
 About my neck your hands and
 hair enwound,
 The hands that stifle and the
 hair that stings,
 I felt them fasten sharply without
 sound.

LXXXI

Yea, for my sin I had great store
of bliss :
Rise up, make answer for me, let
thy kiss
Seal my lips hard from speaking
of my sin,
Lest one go mad to hear how
sweet it is.

LXXXII

Yet I waxed faint with fume of
barren bowers,
And murmuring of the heavy-
headed hours ;
And let the dove's beak fret
and peck within
My lips in vain, and Love shed
fruitless flowers.

LXXXIII

So that God looked upon me
when your hands
Were hot about me ; yea, God
brake my bands
To save my soul alive, and I
came forth
Like a man blind and naked in
strange lands

LXXXIV

That hears men laugh and weep,
 and knows not whence
 Nor wherefore, but is broken in
 his sense ;
 Howbeit I met folk riding from
 the north
 Towards Rome, to purge them of
 their souls' offence,

LXXXV

And rode with them, and spake to
 none ; the day
 Stunned me like lights upon some
 wizard way,
 And ate like fire mine eyes and
 mine eyesight ;
 So rode I, hearing all these chant
 and pray,

LXXXVI

And marvelled ; till before us rose
 and fell
 White cursed hills, like outer
 skirts of hell
 Seen where men's eyes look
 through the day to night,
 Like a jagged shell's lips, harsh,
 untunable,

LXXXVII

Blown in between by devils'
 wrangling breath;
 Nathless we won well past that
 hell and death,
 Down to the sweet land where
 all airs are good,
 Even unto Rome where God's
 grace tarrieth.

LXXXVIII

Then came each man and wor-
 shipped at his knees
 Who in the Lord God's likeness
 bears the keys
 To bind or loose, and called on
 Christ's shed blood,
 And so the sweet-souled father
 gave him ease.

LXXXIX

But when I came I fell down at
 his feet,
 Saying, "Father, though the Lord's
 blood be right sweet,
 The spot it takes 'not off the
 panther's skin,
 Nor shall an Ethiop's stain be
 bleached with it.

XC

“Lo, I have sinned and have spat
 out at God,
 Wherefore his hand is heavier and
 his rod
 More sharp because of mine
 exceeding sin,
 And all his raiment redder than
 bright blood

XCI

“Before mine eyes; yea, for my
 sake I wot
 The heat of hell is waxen seven
 times hot
 Through my great sin.” Then
 spake he some sweet word,
 Giving me cheer; which thing
 availed me not;

XCII

Yea, scarce I wist if such indeed
 were said;
 For when I ceased—lo, as one
 newly dead
 Who hears a great cry out of
 hell, I heard
 The crying of his voice across my
 head.

XCIII

“ Until this dry shred staff, that
 hath no whit
 Of leaf nor bark, bear blossom
 and smell sweet,
 Seek thou not any mercy in
 God's sight,
 For so long shalt thou be cast out
 from it.”

XCIV

Yea, what if dried-up stems wax
 red and green,
 Shall that thing be which is not
 nor has been?
 Yea, what if sapless bark wax
 green and white,
 Shall any good fruit grow upon
 my sin?

XCV

Nay, though sweet fruit were
 plucked of a dry tree,
 And though men drew sweet
 waters of the sea,
 There should not grow sweet
 leaves on this dead stem,
 This waste wan body and shaken
 soul of me.

XCVI

Yea, though God search it warily
 enough,
 There is not one sound thing in
 all thereof ;
 Though he search all my veins
 through, searching them
 He shall find nothing whole there-
 in but love.

XCVII

For I came home right heavy,
 with small cheer,
 And lo my love, mine own soul's
 heart, more dear
 Than mine own soul, more
 beautiful than God,
 Who hath my being between the
 hands of her —

XCVIII

Fair still, but fair for no man sav-
 ing me,
 As when she came out of the
 naked sea
 Making the foam as fire whereon
 she trod,
 And as the inner flower of fire
 was she.

XCIX

Yea, she laid hold upon me, and
 her mouth
 Clove unto mine as soul to body
 doth,
 And, laughing, made her lips
 luxurious;
 Her hair had smells of all the
 sunburnt south,

C

Strange spice and flower, strange
 savour of crushed fruit,
 And perfume the swart kings tread
 underfoot
 For pleasure when their minds
 wax amorous,
 Charred frankincense and grated
 sandal-root.

CI

And I forgot fear and all weary
 things,
 All ended prayers and perished
 thanksgivings,
 Feeling her face with all her
 eager hair
 Cleave to me, clinging as a fire
 that clings

CII

To the body and to the raiment,
 burning them ;
 As after death I know that such-
 like flame
 Shall cleave to me for ever ; yea,
 what care,
 Albeit I burn then, having felt the
 same ?

CIII

Ah love, there is no better life
 than this ;
 To have known love, how bitter a
 thing it is,
 And afterward be cast out of
 God's sight ;
 Yea, these that know not, shall
 they have such bliss

CIV

High up in barren heaven before
 his face
 As we twain in the heavy-hearted
 place,
 Remembering love and all the
 dead delight,
 And all that time was sweet with
 for a space ?

CV

For till the thunder in the trumpet
be,
Soul may divide from body, but
not we
One from another; I hold thee
with my hand,
I let mine eyes have all their will
of thee,

CVI

I seal myself upon thee with my
might,
Abiding alway out of all men's
sight
Until God loosen over sea and
land
The thunder of the trumpets of
the night.

EXPLICIT LAUS VENERIS.





APPENDIX



“The ‘*Laus Veneris*,’ itself sufficiently independent of models, is prefaced by a paragraph in old French purporting to be extracted from a ‘*Livre des Grandes Merveilles d’Amour, escript en Latin et en François par Maistre Antoine Gaget, 1530,*’ but which we confidently father upon Mr. Swinburne himself.”

W. M. ROSSETTI.



APPENDIX

I

NOTE TO LAUS VENERIS

LORS dit en plourant; Hélas trop malheureux homme et maudict pescheur, oncques ne verrai-je clémence et miséricorde de Dieu. Ores m'en irai-je d'icy et me cacherais dedans le mont Horsel, en requérant de faveur et d'amoureuse merci ma douce dame Vénus, car pour son amour serai-je bien à tout jamais damné en enfer. Voicy la fin de tous mes faicts d'armes et de toutes mes belles chansons. Hélas, trop belle estoit la face de ma dame et ses yeulx, et en mauvais jour je vis ces chouses-là. Lors s'en alla tout en gémissant et se retourna chez elle, et là vescu tristement en grand amour près de sa dame. Puis après advint que le pape vit un jour esclater sur son baston force belles fleurs rouges et blanches et maints boutons de feuilles, et ainsi vit-il reverdir toute l'escorce. Ce dont il eut grande crainte et moult s'en esmut, et grande pitié lui prit de ce chevalier qui s'en estoit départi sans espoir comme un homme misérable et damné. Doncques envoya force messaigers devers luy pour le ramener, disant qu'il aurait de

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Dieu grace et bonne absolution de son grand pesché d'amour. Mais oncques plus ne le virent ; car toujours demeura ce pauvre chevalier auprès de Vénus la haulte et forte déesse ès flancs de la montagne amoureuse.

*Livre des grandes merveilles
d'amour, escript en latin et
en François par Maistre An-
toine Gaget. 1530.*

TRANSLATION

Then lamented he weeping : Alas, most unhappy and accursed sinner that I am, in that I shall never see the clemency and mercy of my God. Now will I go forth and hide myself within Mount Horsel, imploring my sweet lady Venus for favour and loving mercy, for willingly would I be forever condemned to hell for her love. Here endeth all my deeds of arms and my sweet singing. Alas that my lady's face and her eyes were too beautiful, and that in an unfortunate moment I saw them. Then went he forth sighing and returned to her, and dwelt sadly in the presence of his lady, filled with a surpassing love. And afterwards it came to pass that one day the pope saw many red and white flowers and leaf-buds spring forth from his staff, and all its bark bloomed anew. So that he feared greatly, and being much

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moved thereby was filled with great pity for the chevalier who had gone forth hopeless like unto a man forever damned and miserable. And straightway sent he numberless messengers to him to bring him back, saying that he should receive grace and absolution from God, for this his so great sin of love. But nevermore was he seen; for the poor chevalier dwelt forever near unto Venus, that most high and mighty Goddess, in the bosom of the amorous mountain.

II

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. *Laus Veneris*. / By / Algernon Charles Swinburne. / London : / Edward Moxon & Co., Dover Street. / 1866.

Collation :— Octavo, pp. 28 ; consisting of Half-title (with blank reverse) pp. 1-2 ; Title-page, as above (with imprint — “London : / Bradbury, Evans, and Co., Printers, Whitefriars ” — in the centre of the reverse), pp. 3-4 ; passage from *Livre des grandes merveilles d’amour, escript en latin et en françois par Maistre Antoine Gaget*. 1530, p. 5 ; p. 6 is blank ; and Text pp. 7-28. The head-line is *Laus Veneris* throughout, on both sides of the page.

Issued in plain paper wrappers, of various colours.

Laus Veneris was also included in *Poems and Ballads*, Moxon, 1866, pp. 11-30, and has been retained in each succeeding edition. The pamphlet, Mr. Swinburne has stated, was issued some months previous to the publication of that volume. Very few copies were printed, most of which were distributed amongst private friends. “In fact,” said Mr. Swinburne, “it was more an experiment

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to ascertain the public taste—and forbearance!—than anything else. Moxon, I well remember, was terribly nervous in those days, and it was only the wishes of mutual good friends, coupled with his own liking for the ballads, that finally induced him to publish the book [*Poems and Ballads*] at all.”

The original Manuscript of *Laus Veneris* has fortunately been preserved, and is now in Mr. Wise’s Swinburne collection. It is written upon sixteen sheets of blue foolscap, mostly upon one side of the paper only. The Manuscript (which is bound in red levant Morocco, by Riviere) is freely corrected, and contains moreover a number of cancelled stanzas, of which here is one:—

*The scent and shadow dead above me
make
The very soul in all my senses ache;
My lips burn, yea mine eyes burn up
with heat,
My face is turned to dust for my pain’s
sake.*

Of the first edition of *Laus Veneris* no copy is to be found in the British Museum. The only example of this exceptionally interesting little volume which has come into the market in recent years figured in one of Messrs. Robson & Co.’s catalogues, priced £30.

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(*French Translation*)

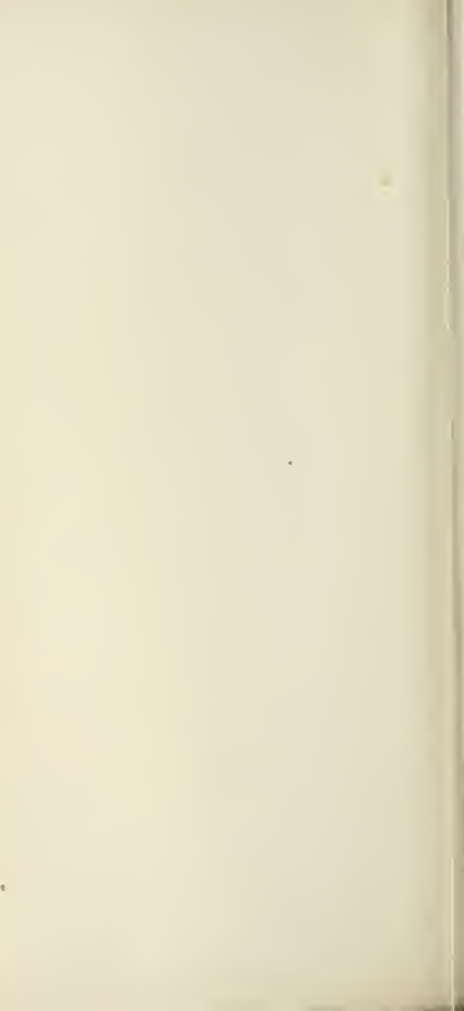
II. *Laus Veneris* / Poème de / Swinburne / traduit par / Francis Vielé-Griffin / Paris / Édition du Mercure de France / 15, rue de L'Échandé-St.-Germain / MDCCCXCV.

Collation : — 24mo. pp. 105.

Issued in paper wrappers, printed in three colours. The edition was limited to 283 copies. The Translation is in French Prose.















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